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### Verity's Bible

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## Verity's Bible: books, texts and reading in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*

Sarah Carpenter

There is a famous and striking dramatic moment in David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* when the newly arrived personification of Verity is confronted by the Spiritual Estate and the Vices. Flatterie challenges her:

Quhat buik is that, harlot, into thy hand?

Out, walloway, this is the New Testament,

In Englisch toung, and prentit in England!

Herisie, herisie! Fire, fire incontinent!<sup>1</sup>

In modern productions, at least, this moment tends to be played as one of dramatic crisis. It theatrically crystallises the opposition of old and new faiths, and the Church's perceived oppression of reform. In this spectacle of confrontation, the book Verity carries becomes a powerful theatrical shorthand for a complex set of ideas. In this paper, I aim consider more closely this moment and the kinds of dramatic and ideological weight it carries; but I also hope to look beyond that particular encounter to the play's wider engagement with books and with reading. This is a play in which ideas about the status and ownership of written text, and the translation, teaching and comprehension of texts in various forms, form a central preoccupation.

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<sup>1</sup> David Lyndsay *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* edited R. J. Lyall (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1989) 1152-5. The play is known to have been performed in Cupar in 1552 and in Edinburgh 1554. It exists in two versions: extended extracts from what appear to be the Cupar version were copied into the Bannatyne manuscript in 1568, and a full text of what seems to have been the Edinburgh version was printed by Robert Charteris in 1602. Lyall's edition takes the Charteris print as its copy text.

One of the issues Lyndsay is concerned with in the *Thrie Estaitis* is the right of access to the truths of faith, as encoded in books. While that raises questions about the availability of vernacular printed texts, as in the challenge to Verity's New Testament, this is not the only means of textual engagement. The 'text', especially the biblical text, exists in the play in many different modes: not only within books, but also in the memory, or on the tongue; made available by teaching as well as by independent reading. This is an important aspect of the play's subject matter; but it is complicated further by the practices of stage performance. The *Thrie Estaitis*' embodiment of books and their contents as stage properties raises questions about the material or immaterial, literal or emblematic quality of text. In this play, books are thus at the centre of strong and sometimes conflicting positions not only on religious belief but also on theatrical practice. Lyndsay's stage books are therefore especially revealing, at this heightened transitional moment on the eve of the Scottish Reformation.<sup>2</sup>

So first – what is Verity and why does she carry a book? She is of course a personification of virtue: Verity and Chastity are the two virtuous figures who arrive in the corrupt world of the play, and are set especially against the perceived failings of the Spiritual Estate. By itself, Verity's name might suggest only a general conception of Truth; but at the point when Lyndsay is writing in the mid-sixteenth century her identity had become both more precise and rather more polemical. Personifications of Veritas were common enough from earlier in the middle ages, especially in the motif of the Four Daughters of God or Parliament of Heaven where Truth acts with her

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<sup>2</sup> For an extensive discussion of these and related issues see Frederick Kiefer *Writing on the Renaissance Stage: written words, printed pages, metaphoric books* (Newark; London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University Presses, 1996).

sisters Mercy, Justice and Peace in a debate on the redemption of mankind.<sup>3</sup> As such, she is only one of the combined qualities of God. Images from this earlier period tend to represent the Four Daughters as distinguished primarily by their narrative context or sometimes by labelling scrolls: Truth rarely carries an attribute and is identified more from her place in the story than from any visual identification.<sup>4</sup> Lyndsay may well have known the motif of the Parliament of Heaven, possibly from the late fifteenth century Scots version that appears in John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome*, dedicated to James IV in 1490.<sup>5</sup> Ireland presents a lively debate between Verity and her sisters in, as he points out, the semi-dramatic '*modum dealogie*' (106). Although Lyndsay does not borrow from the structure or arguments of the Parliament of Heaven in his play, the context of Ireland's work as a *speculum principis* of advice to rulers might inflect his own introduction of the figure of Verity in a directly political, rather than spiritual action.<sup>6</sup>

In the early sixteenth century, however, the image of Veritas begins to acquire more particular connotations that overlie the medieval conceptions. From humanist interest in classical learning, Truth comes to be understood as the daughter of Time, who brings the truth to light.<sup>7</sup> Deriving apparently from a chance remark in Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, the phrase had engendered a widely recognised allegory of

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<sup>3</sup> For the allegory of the Parliament of Heaven see Hope Traver *The Four Daughters of God* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1907); Samuel Chew *The Virtues Reconciled: an iconographic study* (Toronto UP, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> See Chew *Virtues Reconciled* plates 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> John Ireland, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, ed Charles Macpherson, 3 Vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1926) 1: 106-125.

<sup>6</sup> Other Scots versions of the Parliament of Heaven that could have been known to Lyndsay are the brief account in Walter Kennedy's 'The Passioun of Christ', *The Poems of Walter Kennedy*, ed Nicole Meier (Woodbridge: Scottish Text Society, 2008) 20-1 (ll 99-119); and the poem, named 'The benner of peetie' in the Bannatyne manuscript, by Lyndsay's contemporary John Bellenden: *The Bannatyne Manuscript* edited W. T. Ritchie, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1930) 1.3-8.

<sup>7</sup> For the development and sixteenth century use of this allegory see Fritz Saxl '*Veritas Filia Temporis*' in *Philosophy and History: Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer* edited R. Klibansky and H. Paton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936) 197-222; Donald Gordon '*Veritas Filia Temporis*: Hadrianus Junius and Geoffrey Whitney' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3: 3/4 (1940) 228-40.

Time rescuing his daughter from confinement in a hidden cave. In a different strand of images she also becomes a contested figure in the religious struggles of the earlier sixteenth century. Reforming propaganda was attracted to the figure of Truth, pictured as oppressed by various social, ecclesiastical or moral forces.<sup>8</sup>

These new affiliations were brought together in the frontispiece of the *Goodly Prymer in English*, published in 1535.<sup>9</sup> The image shows the ancient figure of Time, in the manner of Christ releasing the Patriarchs from Limbo, drawing his naked daughter Truth from the cave where she had been hidden, while a demonic figure of Hypocrisy vomits over her head. The text of the preface on the facing page attacks the ‘pestilent and infectious bokes’ of Roman Catholic devotion which have ‘pitiuously seduced and deceyued’ the faithful, and commends its own revelation of vernacular truth to devout common readers. The classical image thus combines with the appropriation of the figure of Truth to the Protestant or Reformist cause, here especially embodied in books. It is probably from around this time that the personification of Truth begins to acquire what was to become her common attribute: a book, sometimes a book open to reveal the words *Verbum Dei*.<sup>10</sup> This is an allegorical image, envisaging Truth as the word of God, the divine *logos*. But it also suggests the direct association of the personification of Truth with the material text of the bible, the book that carries the word of God. That material text of the bible itself,

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<sup>8</sup> See Durer’s ‘Michelfeld Tapestry’ in R. W. Scribner *For the Sake of Simple Folk: popular propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge UP, 1981) fig 107, p 141; ‘Die vntertrückt Fraw Warheyte’, attributed Erhard Schoen, in *The Illustrated Bartsch: German Masters of the Sixteenth Century Vol 13* edited by Walter Strauss (New York: Abaris Books, 1984) 1301.074.

<sup>9</sup> *A goodly prymer in englyshe, newly corrected and printed with certeyne godly meditations and prayers added to the same, very necessarie [and] profitable for all them that ryghte assuredly vnderstande not ye latine [and] greke tongues*. (London: John Bydell for William Marshall, 1535) STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) 15988.

<sup>10</sup> See eg the publisher’s imprint of John Ross, Edinburgh as seen on the title page of George Buchanan *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (Edinburgh: John Ross, 1579). Interestingly, in an illustration of the Parliament of Heaven in a 1514 French Book of Hours, the figure of Truth is replaced by *Ecclesia*, who appears to carry a book bag: See Chew (note 3) plate 5.

of course, became a battlefield in which new and old faiths struggled, especially over the question of vernacular translation. So much is this so that the frontispiece to Henry VIII's 'Great Bible' of 1539, the official English Bible circulated for use in churches, showed Henry himself in the image that came to be associated with Truth, presenting his new work, titled *Verbum Dei*, to the nation and the reader.<sup>11</sup>

The figure of Truth was thus adopted into the discourse of religious politics; but she remained a contested image, appropriated by both Protestants and Roman Catholics as an image of their cause. We see this especially vividly in her theatrical manifestations. In a 1527 court interlude, before Henry VIII's split from the Church of Rome, Veritas is a Roman Catholic icon, appearing with Ecclesia and Religion, costumed 'lyke iij novessis', set against 'Erresy, ffalse interpretacyon and Corruptio scriptoris'.<sup>12</sup> But twenty years later we find her in Edward VI's assertively Protestant royal entry, at one pageant with a book and at another praising Henry's suppression of 'hethen rites and detestable idolatrye' which had set her free.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps most famously, at around the time of the production of the *Thrie Estaitis* (1552 and 1554), first Mary Tudor and then Elizabeth each adopted the motto *Veritas Filia Temporis* ('Truth, the daughter of Time') as their own.<sup>14</sup> She appeared in the pageantry for royal entries for both of them, in each case theatrically raising significant issues of devotional allegiance. So in 1554 Mary and her new husband Philip encountered Veritas as part of a Parliament of Heaven pageant: 'wyth a boke in her hande,

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<sup>11</sup> See John N King 'The royal image, 1535-1603' in *Tudor Political Culture* edited Dale Hoak (Cambridge UP, 1995) 104-132, at 108-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters and Papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII* edited by J. F. Brewer et al. 22 vols in 35 (London, 1862-1932) 4:2, 3564 p1605.

<sup>13</sup> *Literary remains of King Edward the Sixth* edited John Gough Nichols 2 vols. (London: Roxburghe Club, 1857) 1:cclxxxvi, ccxc.

<sup>14</sup> See Saxl and Gordon, note 5.

whereon was written *Verbum Dei*'.<sup>15</sup> This securely Roman Catholic image was complicated, however, by the representation of an image of Henry VIII with the same book in the earlier pageant at Gracechurch Street. This allusion to Henry's role in the patronage and circulation of the English translation, the Great Bible, apparently led to an angry confrontation between the Bishop of Winchester and the painter, who subsequently painted out the book and replaced it with a pair of gloves.<sup>16</sup> Then, in her coronation entry in 1559 Elizabeth also encountered Truth, released by her father Time from a cave, who offered the queen the English bible inscribed with the words *Verbum veritatis*. Re-appropriating the image from her Roman Catholic sister, Elizabeth theatrically embraced the book as a sign of her support for her Protestant kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

All this suggests that when Lyndsay's Verity appears holding her book she is entering a field which is already heavy with opposing significances, both theological and partisan. She is certainly treated by the clerics and vices of the play as a political as well as a spiritual danger. Urged on by Flattery, Spirituality is first of all eager to bar Verity from the royal presence 'Now, quhill the King misknawis the veritie' (1110), suggesting that they see her primarily as a threat to secular authority and the relations between Church and State. The outcome of their intervention is that Verity is set in the stocks – an image which was already a recognisable trope of social protest – where she remains until the arrival of Divine Correction.<sup>18</sup> Even before the book

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<sup>15</sup> John Nichols *The chronicle of Queen Jane and of two years of Queen Mary, and especially of the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (London: Camden Society, 1850) 150-1; see King (note 11) 118-20.

<sup>16</sup> Nichols *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 78-9; see Kevin Sharpe *Selling the Tudor monarchy: authority and image in sixteenth-century England* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 2009) 292-6.

<sup>17</sup> John Nichols. *The progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth* 3 vols (London: John Nichols and Son, 1823) 1: 48-51; see Sharpe *Tudor Monarchy* 421-2.

<sup>18</sup> For Verity in the stocks see Durer 'Michelfeld Tapestry' (note 8); compare Justice in the stocks (while the Word of God with open book stands beside her), Peter Flöttner 'The Poor Common Ass' in Scribner (note 6) fig 93, p 122. Compare also the binding of Charity in *The Interlude of Youth* (520-

she carries is identified as an English New Testament, the context of the play's action with its attack on the failings of the Spirituality makes clear that in this play the politicised Verity is a figure associated with reform rather than with the Roman Catholic church. Lyndsay picks up the increasingly familiar Protestant imagery, so that her book is seen not, or not only, as a conceptual emblem of her quality as Truth, or as God's word, but as a politically laden material actuality.

There has been helpful research on the specific identity of Verity's book. There are a number of candidates for English bibles printed in England before 1552, probably the most favoured being Henry VIII's Great Bible of 1539.<sup>19</sup> This is likely to have been the version the English offered to Regent Arran in 1543 for circulation in Scotland following his legislation to permit the reading of vernacular scriptures. Lord Lisle suggested to Arran during these negotiations that he should:

lett slipp emonges the people in this tyme, the Bible and New Testament in Englishe, ... and if you have non in your own tonge, I will help to gett you som out of England.<sup>20</sup>

This may well be the edition of 'ane byble in inglis' recorded as owned by Lyndsay himself after his death.<sup>21</sup> However, though the size of the Great Bible would make it an effective theatrical prop, it would be cumbersome in extended action and, perhaps more significantly, Verity's book is always referred to not as a 'bible' but as a 'New Testament'. This is likely to have created a different visual and theatrical effect, since New Testaments were generally designed to be portable and seem to have often been

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50) and Pity in *Hickscorner* (510-548) in *Two Tudor Interludes: the Interlude of Youth and Hickscorner* edited Ian Lancashire (Manchester UP, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> See Carol Edington *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland: Sir David Lindsay of the Mount* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995) 149-50.

<sup>20</sup> *The Hamilton Papers* edited Joseph Bain 2 vols (Edinburgh: H.M. General Register House, 1890) 1:299.

<sup>21</sup> Edinburgh: National Records of Scotland CS7/15/1 (Register of Acts and Decreits 15) ff. 78v-79v. I am grateful to Dr Janet Hadley Williams for this reference.



considered as pocket books. In the early 1540s when James V's treasurer, the Laird of Grange, was accused of having 'becom ane heretik', one of the signs was 'that he had alwayes a New Testament in Englis in his poutche'.<sup>22</sup> This is clearly not anything on the scale of the Great Bible.

The question of an exact edition may be a red herring, however. In considering how this scene works in performance it is not necessary to assume that the book the actor carried was anything other than a prop, or even it were an English New Testament that Lyndsay had any specific edition in mind. While the focus on its vernacularity and English printing suggests that Verity's book is not a purely symbolic allegorical attribute, it is still a stage representation rather than a literal object. More important than its edition, therefore, is the part the book plays on stage. What does Verity do with it, and what kind of role does it carry in the action, either physical or allegorical? The first thing to say, perhaps, is that neither Verity nor anyone else appears to read from the book she carries. It is argued over, but as far as the text suggests it is not directly consulted. When Verity first enters, she has a substantial soliloquy in which she addresses rulers, both temporal and spiritual, on the topics of the exercise of justice, the protection of the poor and the need to set an example of virtuous deeds. From this speech alone we would not know that she carries a book; she makes no reference to it, nor does she imply that she is reading.

Verity does, however, quote frequently and strikingly both from the scriptures and other sources. Interestingly, her tendency is to quote not directly in the vernacular, but in Latin, most often from the Vulgate, which she then translates. So she opens: '*Diligite Justitiam qui iudicatis terram* / Luif Justice, ye quha hes ane

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<sup>22</sup> James Melville *Memoirs of his own life* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1827) 65.

Judges cure / In earth' (1034-6).<sup>23</sup> Although editions of the New Testament existed which parallel the Vulgate and English texts, it seems unlikely that Verity is presented as 'reading' these quotations from her book since the translations she offers are adapted to Lyndsay's verse scheme rather than deriving from any known published version. Of course, this is not to say that Verity might not act *as if* reading from the book; but since the majority of her quotations, like that above, are not taken from the New Testament this would seem unlikely. Quotation of texts is plentiful and a distinctive aspect of her theatrical identity; so is translation of those quotations to make them accessible; but the act of reading seems less so. Even once the book is identified by Flattery, and Verity defends its content, it is a surprisingly aureate image of God's words that she urges, rather than making any appeal to the efficacy of the literal text. So she explains to her accusers that 'in this buik thair is na heresie, / Bot our Christs word, baith dulce and redolent, / Ane springing well of sinceir veritie' (1157-9).

In all, this scene might seem to suggest an intriguingly transitional mode in theatrical practice. It is important to the play that Verity's book is not simply an icon or emblem of truth, but is identified as a physical printed volume in an accessible language. As such it fits with Protestant notions of a shift from the symbolic to the actual. But in performance the book is nonetheless more than just a material object. While Verity herself speaks the words of God that the bible contains, the book she carries functions as a resonant image of those words and access to them, rather than as

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<sup>23</sup> The quotation is from the Vulgate Book of Wisdom 1.1. Given Verity's opening appeal to justice, it is possibly suggestive that Ireland, in his account of the Parliament of Heaven, seems at times almost to conflate Verity and Justice, speaking of 'dame treuth, þat is þe nobile werty of justice and equite' (109); Ireland's figure of Justice also joins quotations from two psalms to arrive at a pronouncement rather like Verity's in the play: *Dilexisti justiciam et odisti iniquitatem ... Judicabit orbem terre in justicia* (111; sources are Vulgate, Ps 44.8; Ps 9.9). While does not translate these quotations, elsewhere he gives cautious support to some 'translacoun of haly writ in ynglis tounge': see John Asloan, *The Asloan Manuscript : A Miscellany in Prose and Verse*, ed William Craigie, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1923) 1.4.

a functional reading text. So in theatrical practice even the word itself (with its Protestant emphasis) becomes an image (with its Roman Catholic association). As throughout, the play hovers between allegorical and literal action; and these theatrical modes also suggest confessional implications.

After this first striking scene, books, texts and translation all remain important throughout the play, enabling dynamic performance of many of its central preoccupations. There are two other especially significant moments that are worth exploring in relation to Verity's first appearance with the New Testament, and that may help to expand our sense both of Lyndsay's religious ideas and his theatrical practice. The first is a moment in the second half of the play where a New Testament or bible is not only present but is formally consulted and read aloud. During the parliament of the three Estates there is a combative discussion of the proper role of the Spirituality. Gude Counsell remarks that bishops should be preachers, and parsons should teach their parishioners 'ane lessoun', 'of the Evangell'. We then find this exchange:

Spir: Friend, quhair find ye that we suld prechours be?

GC: Luik quhat Sanct Paul wryts unto Timothie.

Tak thair the Buik; let se gif ye can spell!

Spir: I never red that; thairfoir reid it your sell!

*Gude Counsall sall read thir wordis on ane buik:*

*Fidelis sermo, si quis Episcopatum desiderat, bonum opus desiderat. Oportet [ergo], eum irreprehensibilem esse, unius uxoris virum, sobrium, prudentem, ornatum, pudicum, hospitem, doctorem non vinolentum, non percussorem sed modestum.*

That is: ‘This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a worthie worke: A Bishop therefore must be unreproueable, the husband of one wife, etc. (2912-24)

Unlike Verity’s ‘dulce and redolent’ emblem of Christ’s Law, this is primarily a material text, appealed to as literal proof of an ecclesiastical duty. Gude Counsell is citing the words of St Paul in the first Epistle to Timothy. But theatrically, there are some interesting questions about exactly what it is he appears to read, questions which themselves raise further queries about the nature and status of Charteris’ 1602 printed text of the play in which this scene is recorded.<sup>24</sup> First, it appears that Gude Counsell reads not from an English bible, but from a Latin text which he then translates into English. The scene is not, then, building directly on Verity’s English New Testament with its reformist implications; the question raised at this point seems to be about clerical reading and understanding of the Vulgate, not about the broader access of lay people to the bible in English. This suggests that the play is interested not only in the politicised issue of access to the vernacular scriptures, but in dramatising a range of different issues concerning the role of biblical text and how it may be understood.

According to the printed text of the play, Gude Counsell initially reads in Latin, but then appears to translate the words into English. Scholars have pointed out that the English translation of the passage (like others in the play) does not follow any of the editions available to Lyndsay.<sup>25</sup> They have therefore tended to suggest that he

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<sup>24</sup> Bannatyne’s 1568 manuscript which records extensive extracts from the play omits a number of passages which Charteris includes, apparently on the grounds that they are over-serious and refer to matters since reformed. For a comparison of the two texts, see J Derrick McClure, ‘A Comparison of the Bannatyne MS and the Quarto Texts of Lyndsay’s *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*’ in *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance* edited Dietrich Strauss and Horst W Drescher (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986) 409-22.

<sup>25</sup> Lyall xxxviii (see note 1); *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, 1490-1555* edited Douglas Hamer, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1931-6) 4. 219 (note to l.2911).

made his own translation (even though Gude Counsall's words are noticeably more English than Scots). This might perhaps reinforce a sense that what mattered to Lyndsay was not any specifically textual authority as contained in the words themselves, but simply the importance of making meaning broadly accessible. His discussion of the role of translation into the vernacular in a work almost contemporary with the *Thrie Estaitis, Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour*, cites another passage from St Paul to emphasise this point:

Prudent Sanct Paull doith mak narratioun  
 Tucheing the divers leid of every land,  
 Sayand thare bene more edificatioun  
 In five wordis that folk doith understand,  
 Nor to pronounce of wordis ten thousand  
 In strange langage, sine wait not quhat it menis.<sup>26</sup>

What seems important, he suggests, is not the words themselves, but that as he says later, 'every man the veryte did knaw' (655). This also seems to have been the position of Protestant translators of the bible into the vernacular. The Preface to the Geneva Bible, the popular translation led by William Whittingham and published in Geneva in 1560, points out that: 'some translations read after one sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose and edification.'<sup>27</sup>

However, to complicate matters further, it transpires that Gude Counsall's translation in *Charteris'* text *is* in fact taken from a published edition – but it is one

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<sup>26</sup> David Lyndsay 'Ane Exclamatioun to the Redar' in *Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour* in *Selected Poems*, ed Janet Hadley Williams (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2000) 201-5, ll.629-34. The reference is to 1 Corinthians, 14.19.

<sup>27</sup> *The Bible and Holy Scriptures* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560) fol iiiii'.

that post-dates Lyndsay's own lifetime. The Geneva Bible itself provides a translation of the passage from Timothy that exactly matches that of Charteris's print. While this does not significantly change the stage emphasis of the scene as we have it, it does demonstrate that what we have in Charteris is not an exact representation of any manuscript of Lyndsay's, since that could not have included this particular passage of translation.<sup>28</sup> So the inclusion of the passage raises interesting if unanswerable questions both about the nature of Charteris' copy text and about his own editorial role or that of his intermediaries.

It may also reinforce our sense of how Lyndsay was viewed in the decades following his death in 1555. Current reading of Lyndsay's work sees him as subtly poised between traditional and reformist thinking on matters of religious persuasion.<sup>29</sup> This may in part account for the respect in which he seems to have been held by all parties to the controversy during his own lifetime. But from the first decisive steps of the Scottish Reformation shortly after his death, Lyndsay very quickly came to be co-opted as a Protestant hero, his work generally, and the *Thrie Estaitis* in particular, understood as not only outspokenly critical of the Roman Catholic Church but committed to the new faith. This process may even have begun during Lyndsay's own lifetime, as we can see in the publishing history of his poem on the life and death of David Beaton, *The Tragedie of the Cardinall*, written in 1547.<sup>30</sup> This work was published in a somewhat adapted form in a London edition in 1548, and Janet Hadley Williams has revealingly demonstrated how the English adapter at crucial points

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<sup>28</sup> By the time of the 1602 edition of the play the Geneva Bible was fully established in Scotland. It is perfectly possible that Charteris drew on the Edinburgh 'Bassandyne Bible' version of 1579, the first bible printed in Scotland.

<sup>29</sup> See Edington (note 19) 145-6.

<sup>30</sup> David Lyndsay *The Tragedie of the Cardinall* in *Selected Poems* ed Hadley Williams 112-27.

slightly altered the phrasing of the poem to heighten its reformist implications.<sup>31</sup> This evidence points both to the carefully poised balance of Lyndsay's own religious position and to the ways in which reformers read a more partisan commitment in his works. George Bannatyne, copying extensive extracts of the play into his manuscript anthology in 1568, clearly read the *Thrie Estaitis* as an explicit forerunner of the Reformation, explaining that he omitted 'the grave mater thairof becaus the samyne abvse is weill reformit in scotland praysit be god'.<sup>32</sup> Charteris' own preface to his edition of Lyndsay's poetic *Works* in the same year used the *Thrie Estaitis* as an example to assure his readers that Lyndsay was 'plane aganis thame [the Roman Catholic Church], and as it war professit enemy to thame'.<sup>33</sup> While Charteris' inclusion of the Geneva translation in his text of the play may therefore be simply practical, reflecting what was by then the established biblical text of the Reformed Kirk, it may also offer a marginal reinforcement of the appropriation of Lyndsay to the cause of the Reformation.

Whatever the textual politics of this insertion we will, I imagine, continue to assume that this scene in performance in 1552 and 1554 involved a reading of the Latin Vulgate followed by a translation. We cannot be sure of the nuances this involved, or even whether that is exactly what happened on stage; yet it seems unlikely, given the determinedly accessible theatrical practice of the play, that Gude Counsell would have been directed to read the passage only in Latin. Equally, we do not know how the scene might have been recorded in the original manuscript: whether

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<sup>31</sup> Janet Hadley Williams, 'The Earliest Surviving Text of Lyndsay's *Tragedie of the Cardinall*: An English Edition of a Scottish Poem' in *Literature, Letters and the Canonical in Early Modern Scotland* eds Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) 22-34.

<sup>32</sup> *Bannatyne Manuscript*, 3.101. In England, George Bulleyn in 1564 already depicts Lyndsay as 'breakyng a sonder the counterfeite crosse kaies of Rome': *A Dialogue .. against the feuer Pestilence* (London: John Kingston, 1564) Bviii<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> *The Warkis of the famous and vorthie knight Schir David Lyndesay of the Mont* (Edinburgh: Henrie Charteris, 1568) fol iii<sup>r</sup>.

it offered a full citation of the Latin followed by an English or Scots translation that was then replaced in Charteris' edition, or whether it simply provided a biblical reference to the passage in either or both languages. While Lyndsay's emphasis on reading, knowledge and understanding of the scripture is evident, the exact role of texts and books in transmitting that knowledge is neither clear nor recoverable.

In spite of this uncertainty, it remains crucial to the theatrical encounter that Gude Counsall should not just quote the words of the epistle, but read them out from the page. Because although the confrontation starts from an argument about Episcopal preaching, it very quickly shifts to the book and the act of reading itself. Gude Counsall counters Spirituality's blustering response to his reading of the passage:

GC: Schir, red ye never the Newtestament?

Spir: Na, sir, be him that our Lord Jesus sauld,

I red never the New Testament nor Auld,

Nor ever thinks to do, sir, be the Rude:

I heir freiris say that reiding dois na gude.

GC: Till yow to reid them, I think it is na lack,

For anis I saw them baith bund on your back,

That samin day that ye was consecrat.

Sir, quhat meinis that?

Spir: The Feind stick them that wat!

(2932-40)



The joke is on Spirituality here, not because of any false beliefs or superstitious rituals, or even for his failure to preach, but because he has not, and apparently cannot read the Vulgate bible. He is shown as failing to engage with the book of God's word either literally in its text or mentally in its meaning. Gude Counsall's book thus functions as a specific and material exposure of deep-rooted ignorance. However, interestingly Gude Counsall here reproaches Spirituality not only with a failure to read or understand the words of the bible, but with a failure even to read the symbols associated with Roman Catholic ritual. The books of the Old and New Testament are not only there to be read as texts; they play a symbolic role in the consecration of bishops.<sup>34</sup> It is revealing that Gude Counsall appears to understand and respect both this symbolic ritual language, and the printed text; Spirituality does neither.

The questions raised about texts, reading and translation are resonant in this scene, although they expand rather than focusing the particular issues raised by Verity and her English New Testament. The scene is shortly followed by another theatrical confrontation which, while this time it does not actually involve the reading of a book, seems to throw up yet more issues about the access to and use of texts and translations. Following further sharp criticism from John the Commonweil, Spirituality calls for his examination for heresy, under threat of burning. This leads into a tense confrontation in which both the feigned Friar, Flattery, and the instrument of God, Divine Correction himself, call on John to 'Schaw furth your faith' (3021). This seems to be, and is certainly taken as, an instruction to repeat the 'belefe' or Creed enumerating the twelve articles of faith. On stage, the familiar recitation

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<sup>34</sup> In the ceremony for consecration of a bishop, just after the moment where this passage from Paul is read, is a direction that the consecrand should lay his head upon the altar, *Et duo episcopi ponant et teneant euangelium super uerticem eius* ('and let two bishops place and hold the gospel over his head'): *The Pontifical of Magdalen College* edited H. A. Wilson (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1910) 73.

becomes a theatrically intense testing ground for the competing ethical and spiritual values of the play.

John the Commonweil speaks the first part of the Creed in English:

I beleife in God, that all hes wrocht  
 And creat everie thing of nocht,  
 And in His Son, our Lord Jesu,  
 Incarnat of the Virgin trew;  
 Quha under Pilat tholit passioun,  
 And deit for our salvatioun,  
 And on the thrid day rais againe,  
 As Halie Scriptour schawis plane;  
 And als, my Lord, it is weill kend  
 How he did to the Heavin ascend,  
 And set Him down at the richt hand  
 Of God the Father, I understand,  
 And sall cum judge on Dumisday. (3022-34)

Lyndsay has clearly versified the words to fit the metre and rhyme scheme of the play at this point, but otherwise this follows fairly straightforwardly the terms of the Apostles' Creed as far as they outline the nature and life of Christ. At this point John stops and asks Divine Correction:

Quhat will ye mair, Sir, that I say?

DC Schaw furth the rest; this is na game.

JC     I trow *Sanctam Ecclesiam* –  
          But nocht in thir bischops nor thir freirs,  
          Quhilk will for purging of thir neirs  
          Sard up the ta raw and down the uther.  
          The mekill Devill resave the fiddler. (2035-41)

Briefly and perhaps unexpectedly returning to Latin, John professes faith in the Church, but abruptly cuts himself off to reject the clerics with earthily comic sexual abuse.

This scene clearly raises interesting theological issues in terms of what John will and will not affirm. Not only does he question the Church, and leave off before the last articles, but he oddly omits the familiar references to the Holy Ghost in the earlier part of the Creed. For this discussion, however, I want to look not at these issues but at the text of the Creed itself and how it functions in the scene. It may seem political, practical, or entirely unremarkable that John repeats the Creed mostly in English. From at least the beginning of the sixteenth century the Church seemed to have accepted and even encouraged the learning of the key texts of the faith – the Pater Noster, Ave, Creed and Ten Commandments – in the vernacular.<sup>35</sup> Popular primers and lay texts circulated versions in English. There even survives a very early printed and illustrated version in Scots included in the *Kalendayr of Schyppars*, a translation of the *Kalendrier des Bergiers* printed in Paris in 1503.<sup>36</sup> However, it is not wholly clear how widely such versions had spread in Scotland. Lyndsay himself,

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<sup>35</sup> Eamon Duffy *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1992) 80-83.

<sup>36</sup> *The kalendayr of the shyppars [Compost et kalendrier des bergiers.]* (Paris: Antoine Verard, 1503) fol fii<sup>r</sup>.

in *Ane Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour*, speaks as if there is still a real need for both the availability and acceptance of vernacular versions:

Rycht so childreyng and ladyis of honouris  
 Prayis in Latyne, to thame ane uncuth leid,  
 Mumland thair matynis, evinsang and thare houris,  
 Thare *Pater Noster*, *Ave*, and thare *Creid*. (615-8)

He points out that ‘Had Sanct Jerome bene borne in tyll Argyle / In to Irische [*Gaelic*] tounge his bukis had done compyle’ (627-8), concluding: ‘Bot in our language lat us pray and reid / Our *Pater Noster*, *Ave*, and our *Creid*’ (648-9).

It is therefore possible that John the Commonweil’s recitation in English is a stronger and more polemical statement than it might seem. It is also interesting that he slips back into Latin for the contentious moment when he asserts faith in the Church but distinguishes *Sanctam Ecclesiam* from the clerics. This may tell us something revealing about the relationship of English and Latin texts of the Creed in lay culture, about translation, bilingualism and ease with the macaronic. It does appear that Latin and English coexisted and interwove comfortably for a considerable time through the sixteenth century. Alternatively in this speech it may be a subtle linguistic tool to distinguish the revered and sacred institution of the Church from the corrupt and ignorant behaviour of its priests. Whichever, the shift to Latin at such a tense and loaded moment of John’s recitation foregrounds the whole issue both of the language of prayer, and also the integrity and fixed-ness of texts.

For although John is reciting something that had widespread existence as a written text, he is not reading it. Nor is it at all clear that we should assume he memorised it from a written or printed text which his recitation aims to reproduce. The emphasis of English translation of these texts was not to replace the fixed sacred words of the Latin with an equally fixed vernacular version. Lay learning of these texts was more concerned with sense than with a notion of verbal accuracy.<sup>37</sup> So when Lyndsay urges that the Creed should be available in English, it seems he is thinking of it in people's minds and mouths rather than only in their books. Lyndsay valued books, and especially vernacular books, highly: in the *Dialog* he appeals urgently:

Bot lat us haif the bukis necessare  
 To common weill and our salvatioun  
 Justlye translatit in our tounge vulgare. (678-80)

But it seems clear that he valued them as instruments, as a means of access to knowledge and understanding. He does not fetishize either the material text, or the act of reading.

Taken together, these three scenes all suggest the transitional quality of Lyndsay's religious position. Verity with her New Testament vividly recalls Protestant iconography, but the play's opposition is to the ignorance and idleness of the Spirituality rather than to anything identified as Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. Gude Counsall urges the Protestant value of preaching, but seems fully comfortable with the Latin bible and even with Roman Catholic ritual practice. John

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<sup>37</sup> See Whittingham's comments above (note 27) and Duffy (note 35) 84-5 on the 'Plowman's Pater Noster'.

the Commonweil shows no reverence to clerics, but proclaims his faith in the Holy Catholic Church. We might also see these scenes as revealing a dynamically transitional mode of theatrical practice. In all three, Lyndsay takes books or texts that might function on stage symbolically – as emblems of truth, or the Word of God, or of Christian orthodoxy – and translates them from ritual images into functional material texts. Yet in theatrical performance, these texts can never entirely lose their representational quality as signs and images. The stage is necessarily an arena of images, its representations never entirely literal. Lyndsay's *dramatis personae* are themselves largely symbolic, adopted from allegorical schema; but he tends to push them towards social types, giving them dialogue which is frequently forcefully colloquial and focused on practical rather than theological or devotional issues. His theatrical practice is therefore as fluid and mixed as his religious ideology. Just as Lyndsay trod a thoughtful path between Protestant and Roman Catholic belief, so his play moves comfortably and creatively between symbolic and naturalistic theatrical modes.

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